

Mi Pajarito

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Mi Pajarito

by [IntrovertWithCaffeine](#)

Summary

"Hush little Sparrow, you are not getting away this time."

Death would not cull Sparrow's spirit – but a cage would wear it down until it was fragile enough to shatter.

This starts in the battle just before Jack and the crew get to the island and find the trident.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

- Inspired by [No te haré daño](#) by [Lunnaya_Murka](#)

Two ships collided beneath the thunderous rain and encompassing fog; the boom of cannons and crashing, splintering wood drowned out the battering waves as undead sailors and pirates took up arms. Jack danced through the battlefield like a frivolous bird, flitting around seamlessly and teasing Salazar's men. He gave the impression of a drunk sauntering across the deck, arms fluttering around excessively as he waded through the conflict.

Armando tracked his movements, tar eyes glittering with unconcealed hatred; he felt the tended furnace of rage burning inside his chest as he stalked towards the pirate, sword in hand. When Sparrow noticed him a taunting smirk graced his face for a second, before he swiveled round and took off in the opposite direction. Beneath the roar of battle, Armando gave chase.

Through the ship and between clashing blades Sparrow danced, Armando pursuing him until the

pirate was forced to exchange swords in a momentary duel. It ended with Jack's back against the damp, wooden deck, sword out of his sight and frozen still as a blade was pressed against his neck. Lightning cut through the darkness and rain, revealing the pirate's alarm.

The visible twinge of fear ignited a fierce feeling inside of Armando; he pushed the tip of his sword forward so that it grazed the tanned skin, and watched hungrily as crimson droplets spilled onto the deck of his beloved ship. The Silent Mary tasted blood from the pirate who had cursed and wrecked and *eluded* her – and she called for more. Armando had seen the moment countless times behind closed eyes, and now that it was here, he wanted to draw it out – to crush Sparrow's hope until he felt the same desperation that had eaten at him for years.

“*Sparrow*,” he savoured the shiver that ran up the man's spine.

A grimy hand reached out and patted his shoulder while carefully edging around the sharp weapon. “Spanish! Long time no see.” His lips quirked up into that infuriating smirk, “Before we begin, I think there is something you're forgetting—”

Armando chuckled humorlessly and pressed his blade further against the pirates neck in warning. He knew the little bird's games; how he would chirp and sing a pretty song and that was all it would take to weasel his way out of a situation.

“What am I *forgetting*, Sparrow?”

“Well let me see...” Intelligent eyes pretended to ponder the question while ever occupied fingers fiddled absently with the various rings adorning his hands. Only when Armando's patience began to run thin did he speak, “Ah! Yes I remember now.”

Clearing his throat dramatically, he pointed behind Armando's shoulder, “There's an island you might want to avoid mate.”

Twisting around, Armando's eyes widened at the sight of a rapidly approaching beach. “Turn the ship!” he ordered. And when his attention shifted back to where Sparrow had been standing a moment ago, the man was gone. Growling in frustration, his eyes were drawn to his enemy scampering up the bow of the ship. “Catch Sparrow! Don't let him escape!”

As Jack paused to grab Henry, who remained oblivious to the unfolding scene, and drag him along on his escape, it gave two of Salazar's men a chance to seize him. The edge of a blade snagged Jack's shoulder as he barely managed to evade their decayed, grasping hands. Blood seeped into the patchy linen and Jack winced, but ignored it in favour of searching for a way off the Silent Mary, which was veering further and further away from his Pearl.

Armando watched helplessly as Sparrow snatched a frayed rope stretching from the rigging, gave him a mocking salute, and flew from his grasp. *Again.* The pirate and the boy landed aboard the deck of the Pearl while the Silent Mary made the turn before sandy beaches could swallow them. Sparrow was surrounded by his companions who clamoured for his attention and for the tale of how he outwitted *El Matador Del Mar* for the second time.

But that wouldn't do.

Watching his prey fly from his grasp, Armando sneered; it was then that he decided that death would be far too kind a fate for Sparrow.

No. Death would not cull Sparrow's spirit – but a cage would wear it down until it was fragile enough to shatter.

Jack cradled the wheel of the Pearl lovingly, promising her that she would be back on the rocking waves soon. Opening his compass he frowned at it for a long moment while the crew meandered around on the deck wearily, even Barbossa joined them to eye the Silent Mary floating in the distance. Jack was still watching the compass needle when Henry spoke.

“They can’t attack until we try and escape the island.”

Nodding solemnly, Jack finally looked up at the boat unseeingly. Snapping his compass shut, the uncharacteristic earnestness vanished as quickly as it had appeared, and was replaced by a hearty grin. “Well I’d say this means that we got a free pass to Posiden’s booty, mates. Let’s not waste this chance, eh?”

The crew cheered in approval and when the ruckus calmed they began clambering down to the solid land; the welp pulled Jack aside before he could join them. “Listen Jack, I just wanted to say thanks, and– are you alright?”

He stopped short upon seeing the blood staining Jack’s shirt, the top of the sleeve having turned a slick crimson but Jack angled his body away before Henry could get a better look.

“No need to thank me, mate.” Jack smiled, “an’ I’m fine. Yer father is the only distressin’ damsel

you need to concern yerself with now.” He slid past Henry and stumbled down to the deck in a convincing drunk parody. The persistent boy didn’t give up and trailed after him.

“Jack—”

Halting suddenly, Jack gave the lad a friendly jab in the ribs and gestured at the rest of the crew waiting impatiently on the shore. “You go join the crew, else I’ll ‘ave Gibbs impart you with some nasty stories ‘bout what happens to nosey pirates.”

The young Turner spluttered, “I’m not a pirate!”

Jack laughed and patted the boy on the back consolingly. After the whelp had climbed down, he let the smile droop and shifted his weight to lean more heavily on the side of his ship. One last glance out at the seething ocean, and he went to join the crew.

Barbossa was the only person who noticed it, having stayed on deck to eavesdrop on the conversation, and now he scrutinised Jack for a long second. The man’s flamboyant attitude had dissipated and Barbossa saw a look in his eyes, a look which had no place on a free spirit like Jack. Shaking his head tiredly, he turned away, knowing that he would never be able to understand Jack despite having known him for years.

Once Carina had decoded the puzzle, the sea parted before them in a great swirling mass. While Henry doted, Barbossa wore a proud smile that made everyone feel uneasy. Jack gave the man a knowing grin and his lips immediately turned down as he settled back into the usual glare.

Walls of water loomed over them; the humid ocean scent of salt and wet sand became more prominent the further they trekked, surrounding them in a dense fog. Coral protruded from the ground and every manner of fish swam beside the barrier cluelessly – the depths truly were breathtaking.

The trident was much less impressive than any of them had envisioned; it looked more like gnarled barbs of seaweed, but no matter how it appeared, everyone present could feel the power radiating from it. Metal scraping against a scabbard made them all turn around; Henry approached the trident – the key to his father’s freedom – and prepared to swing.

“Wait!”

The boy hesitated and lowered his sword slightly at Jack's exclamation. "What?" he asked impatiently.

"I know you're eager to be rid of that lad, but we best wait until we're out of the magical water tunnel." Jack waved his hands around his head haphazardly to highlight his point.

Henry hesitated, but then sighed in resignation and put his sword back safely. While the whelp carried the trident, Jack tailed the group and eyed their surroundings suspiciously; a nasty crab had scuttled out from behind a rock and he nearly drew his sword on it. *Dratted crabs.* As they climbed back aboard the Pearl, Barbossa slapped Jack's back good naturedly and laughed croakily when the pirate leapt into the air.

"What's got you on edge, Jack?"

His tone was joking, yet Jack noted the cautious probing behind the question; he seemed to be the only one to have noticed Jack's stranger-than-usual behaviour.

"Nothing," he brushed off, sliding past Barbossa to go and stand beside Henry. The trident was laid out on the deck and a shaky sword held over it. All thoughts of angry Spaniards and undead crews drifted into the background at the feeling of the magic pulsating from the object. Wisps that lashed out from the trident were like icy tendrils of smoke that enticed a primal feeling to rise up in his chest; it was as if the trident knew its end was near. A pat of assurance from Jack was all it took for Henry to swing his weapon down, and the result was instantaneous.

A wave of energy exploded from the Pearl and washed away every curse it had maintained in a fell swoop. At the epicentre of the radiation, the crew watched on in awe as the magical item fractured before their eyes; they all released a collective sigh of relief when the last reminisce of it evaporated and the power radiating from it vanished as well.

Stunned silence prevailed, but slowly, as time unfroze piece by piece, everything returned to how it was. The water lapping at the hull was a peaceful hymn, and the billowing sails relaxed lamely on the mast. Chatter soon followed, and excited exclamations quickly replaced their numb shock.

"We did it!"

An explosion paused the celebration as a cannon ball hurtled towards the ship, landing meters from the Pearl and causing a splash which alerted them to exactly how close it had been to hitting her

hull.

The crew looked to Jack for orders, an explanation, something, but the pirate Captain only stared with wide eyes at where the projectile had come from. It was the Silent Mary – restored to her previous glory she sailed proud and fast. The crew of flesh and bone worked the sails with a rejuvenated energy; their Captain stood at the helm, enjoying the feeling of wind caressing his skin and the invitingly cool sea breeze mingling with the beating Caribbean sun. A smile marred his face, and his eyes held a cold vengeance, seeming more vicious in life than in cursed death – and Jack knew, with a looming sense of defeat, that he would not be getting away this time.

“Gibbs, you and the crew – full sails, Barbossa take the wheel for now, and Henry – I have a task for you.” Jack dished out his orders while trying to exude a confidence that he did not feel.

Armando watched the turmoil aboard the pirate ship and the frantic attempts of the crew with glee. Oh how he would enjoy killing each and everyone of them before the little Sparrow’s eyes, and seeing the fire and freedom drain out of him. *It would be magnificent.*

“Hold fire, men.” He demanded.

“Sir?” One of his sailors questioned.

“One must live to tell the tale.” He grinned manically and his crew followed suit, infused with a new blood-lust. He saw his pirate scale the ropes up to the crows nest, and as the Pearl caught the first gusts of wind in its sails, Sparrow gave him that infuriating, mocking smile which always invited the chase – that smile would disappear soon.

Armando followed the Pearl with a caution and wisdom that he didn’t hold back then. Years spent in torment, his body searing with the pain of a thousand knives and flames of prickling heat which consumed his flesh, had taught him the value of time. He would remain patient for the moment, and when the time came he wouldn’t hesitate to rip the wings from Sparrow’s back.

The wind hailed the Silent Mary and gave her the speed that had them gaining on the Pearl with ease; when the pirates realised that the ocean’s favour had abandoned them, they chose to face the perilous shores instead of the open water. Jagged rocks peeked their fatal thorns above the surface; they were haphazardly placed around the island so that no ship the size of the Pearl would ever be able to maneuver through them.

Armando ignored the burning hate for the man inside the crow's nest, and veered his ship away from Sparrow's trickery, and instead waited for the pirates to make their move. They dropped anchor long before they could collide with the rocks, but now they were sitting ducks, trapped and cornered and forced to face Salazar's revenge.

The jolly roger waved its grinning skull and crossbones as they approached and prepared to board. The sound of numerous swords being drawn filled Armando's ears, but as his crew crossed the plank and boarded the Pearl, nothing else could be heard besides the distant crash of waves and the occasional gull. It was like a barren ghost of a vessel, the noise from their footsteps seeming magnified as his crew spanned the deck.

The stray creak of a sail made him glance up, and it was the only warning he got before a person leapt down from the rigging. He stepped out of the way as Sparrow landed easily, his boots thudding against the deck almost soundlessly and without a falter. A swipe of his sword and Armando raised his own to parry; their blades connected with a clang, and both men observed each other steadily.

"Where is the rest of your crew, Sparrow?"

Dark eyes flitted away from his gaze for a moment before reciprocating his stare with a suppressed smirk that concealed whatever emotion had been there before.

"It's *Captain Sparrow*." He ended the conversation with a teasing jab of his blade that ignited Armando's fury.

The Spaniard hardly noticed his crew gathering around them to watch and cheer as he engaged Sparrow. His veins were pumping with rage that he brought down on the only man who dared oppose him and leave the rancid taste of defeat in his mouth. Raining heavy blows down on the little Pirate, the man's arm buckled as he deflected his blade. The more Armando fought, the more he became entranced with the harmonious clash of steel. With each strike the pirate's form grew sloppier and his arms more exhausted; he was tired and injured, and was easily backed against the mast of his ship. With a flick of his wrist, Armando rid him of his sword that went skittering across the deck.

It took a second for him to escape the haze of anger and truly grasp that he now had Sparrow in his clutches again, and this time, this time he would *never* let him go. Sparrow had become his purpose in death, and with renewed life, he couldn't let that go. He was going to lock his pirate in a gilded cage and make him sing a desperate tune of freedom as he threw away the key. He was going to wrap his bird in chains of gold and glittering gems that would weigh down his wings and spirit in luxury. The symbols of victory he would reclaim from the murderous thieves would line this man's tanned skin and knot itself in his hair so he would remember that he would never set sail on a free

ocean again. The picture painted itself in his mind and reflected a crazed look into his eyes. Jack gulped, but didn't lean away from the familiar sword resting on his neck.

With a smug smirk and a head filled with plans, Armando repeated his question, "Where is your crew, *pajarito*?"

And then gone was the little bird, and back was the sly trickster that has survived all odds for so long.

"Long gone by now I'd expect." Jack's unconcerned and wild air had returned, and he winked mischievously at Salazar.

"Lies," the Spaniard hissed, pressing his sword closer making the pirate back away instinctively.

"I'm starting to notice these meetings between us are always rather similar, you know? You threaten me, we chat, an' then I escape. And you know I'm completely fine with these arrangements if you are so I think I best be going now—"

Salazar grabbed the pirate's collar and lifted him almost effortlessly to hold him against the mast. Jack flinched as he was pressed into the wood and Salazar's heartless eyes pierced him with an unforgiving glint.

He looked down at the offending hands reproachfully.

"They're gone, an' they're not coming back, mate. Used the dinghy to get through those rocks while you were preoccupied – less sailors to murder now I'm afraid."

Ah, his selfless bird had sacrificed himself to protect them.

Sparrow was a paradox that had flown into his arms to save his crew, unknowing of what he had truly gotten himself into; Armando couldn't contain the laugh that sliced through the air, and was Jack suddenly not so sure of himself. "Oh Sparrow," Salazar murmured almost fondly. "I don't care if they *live*, or if they *die*. But you? You will *suffer*."

Jack was hit by a wave of nausea. When Salazar's grip on his shirt loosened he managed to jerk free and, in a final race for freedom, he dived for the plank that joined the two ships. *If he could*

just get across and knock the plank into the water, then he could bide himself sometime and stand a better chance—

A rough hand seized him and another wrapped around his neck; he was pulled into a body and trapped in a vice-like grip. Salazar tutted when he tried to twist away. Ropes constricted his hands making him even more frantic, and when warm breath tickled his ear he barely registered the words spoken.

“Hush little Sparrow, you are not getting away this time.”

He was carried aboard the Silent Mary. Some crew members went to search though the Pearl and came back up empty handed, except for one. One of the sailors had gone into the hull and returned with a barrel of gunpowder, leaving a trail of the flammable material which disappeared below deck again.

“No,” Jack whispered in abject horror. He floundered against the sailors’ bruising hold, but no matter how much he struggled to and fought to reach his ship, it was useless. He couldn’t reach the knife in his boot and the ropes on his hands had cut into his wrists making them bleed. Salazar turned to him with a cruel smile and watched in fascination, the pain glittering in his pirate’s eyes, the kohl beneath them slightly smudged. Slowly the desperate thrashing died down, but Sparrow still leaned towards his ship with a frenzied look on his face.

“Beg Sparrow, and you beloved ship will remain as she is.”

Jack hesitated, expressive eyes searching Salazar’s icy ones, but then he shook his head tightly.

“No,” Jack stated, his voice holding a hollow note, but clear for everyone to hear. Armando nodded in acceptance. *If conquering Sparrow had been that easy, he would have been disappointed.* Gesturing to his sailor, the man lit the powder and once the sparks had fled inside the ship, the Silent Mary started drifting away.

“You stole everything from me Sparrow, and now you will witness all you love *burn*.”

As the first explosions echoed across the island, Jack couldn’t bring himself to tear his eyes away. His beautiful ship engulfed in flames for the second time. Paint, rich woods and memories reduced to nothing, smoke was already drifting through the air and the stifling fog made him heave. Whatever remained of his Pearl after the explosion was accepted by the ocean’s depths and its

ashes scattered on the wind.

He barely registered the rough hands that grabbed him and dragged him below deck, and when a heavy object connected with his head, he welcomed darkness that encased him in its tender oblivion.

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“Jack!”

They had all heard the explosion from where they had landed on the island. Henry staggered to the water’s edge, leaving the stunned crew behind on the beach. Plumes of smoke rose from across the rocky waters and felt his legs threatening to collapse. “Jack,” he pleaded to the wind, “you got away didn’t you? You’re fine, you’re safe.”

A steady hand landed on his shoulder and it seemed to be the final weight which made him fall to his knees, wet sand soaking his trousers.

“A pirate’s life.” Barbossa said bitterly, sharp nails digging into his skin slightly. “Let’s not allow Jack’s sacrifice to be in vain.”

He helped the younger man up and the crew got back to heaving the boat onto the shore with downcast eyes and hearts. Gibbs was the only one who’s eyes remained fixated on the black cloud of smoke. Someone called him, and he allowed himself one more second to shake his head firmly before joining the others.

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The process of regaining consciousness was slow and rather painful with how his head was pounding. Creaking wood and the rocking of a boat was the first thing he noticed. Next was the tell tale smell of rotting wood and rusting metal that was unique to the brig. Trying to sit up, he groaned, and lay down again quickly.

“Bugger,” he moaned, sitting up slower this time and opening his eyes gradually so that he could adjust to the poor lighting. He would have jumped to his feet in surprise if it wasn’t for this blimmin headache when he saw a Spaniard staring down at him from the other side of the bars.

“Buggering fuck.” he cursed. This was not how he had planned for things to go. “You think you could spare a bottle ‘o rum mate? I hear it helps with headaches.”

Jack ignored the gaping feeling in his chest and tried to erase thoughts of his Pearl for now. Salazar chuckled and Jack stared up at him suspiciously, subtly feeling for any of his hidden weapons and finding none. A knife of panic stabbed at him when he realised that his compass was also missing from his person.

“I’m afraid that there is no rum for pirates, *mi pajarito*.”

“That’s a shame.” Jack said, then tilted his head curiously, “*Pajarito*? Translates to ‘bird’ doesn’t it?”

Salazar nodded and gazed at his little bird with new interest. “Dime pajarito, hablas español?” (Tell me little bird, do you speak Spanish?)

Sparrow was quick to twist his face into confusion, “Sorry what was that mate?”

The Spaniard’s lips twitched up into a small grin; it seemed that the pirate had a limitless number of tricks up his sleeve that he couldn’t wait to extract.

“I propose a bargain, Sparrow”

Curiosity peaked, the pirate leaned forward slightly and met his eyes expectantly. Salazar’s smile grew as he noticed he had gotten the man’s undivided attention.

“A bargain you say?” His voice was cautious but they both knew that the Spaniard was walking into Sparrow’s territory of woven words and deceptive promises.

“You will answer three of my questions, truthfully, and then I will give you this.” Salazar brought Jack’s compass out into the light, letting it sway temptingly on its chain. The little Sparrow’s eyes widened, and then narrowed in fury as he made to grab his compass through the cage, but it was snatched out of his reach.

“Where did you get that?”

With churning anger, his facade vanished and Jack Sparrow was revealed from under his masks. It was mesmerizing to watch his eyes come alight, a vicious intelligence dancing in the darkness. But Salazar also saw the flickering fear of a young boy who stared defiantly into his enemy’s eyes but couldn’t help the trembling of his unweathered hands. A boy who was hunted, and weary, and desperate because of *him*.

“Sir, we’ve spotted a pirate ship,” a sailor addressed respectfully, maintaining a careful distance at the door. Armando didn’t turn away from the pirate, who was watching him icily; he returned the look with disdain, unknowing of what was happening behind those molton eyes.

“Three questions, Sparrow.” Jack tracked his compass as Armando slipped it into his pocket. “Do you know why the caged bird sings?”

Leaning forward conspiratorially, the pirate wore a vacant smirk, “For freedom.”

Armando sighed in faux disappointment and finally addressed the sailor. “We will send every pirate the bottom of the ocean, and Sparrow?” He met the man’s eyes once more. “You will serve as my trophy.”

Soon the roar of battle soon seeped below the deck where Jack paced in his cage. As soon as he was sure everyone was thoroughly preoccupied, he pulled a jangling set of keys out of the folds of shirt and hummed a small tune to the sound of gunfire and metal as he tried each of the keys before the cell door finally swung open. Before he left he observed the hull mistily, noting every crevice that reminded him of his Pearl. But there wasn’t enough time to mourn since the clamour was already starting to die down; Jack quickened his pace lest he waste this opportunity. As he stumbled onto the deck he took a deep breath of fresh air, ignoring the smell of blood and smoke. Carefully stepping over the body of a fallen pirate, he paused to pick up the gun laying in his unmoving hand; he examined the weapon and absentmindedly wiped away the fresh specs of scarlet on the handle. When it was up to his standards, he hid it in a pocket and went back to strolling around the boat. To anyone who didn’t know Jack it would seem that he was an unarmed fool stumbling around the chaos, remaining inconspicuous to pirates and sailors alike. But with a little more observation, one would notice how his eyes scanned and memorized anything of note, while schemes were planned and abandoned with the twitch of his fingers. Wandering over to the helm, he easily knocked the sailor who was stationed at the wheel off his feet and sent him tumbling down the stairs with a gleeful wave.

The pirate captain was no match for Armando and fell to his sword. *El Matador Del Mar* admired

his weapon vindictively; the pirate's screams and dying breath made his frozen heart sing with vengeance, the Silent Mary echoing his satisfaction. His crew rounded up the survivors and herded them aboard his ship, but before he could order their death, the boat gave a sudden lurch, knocking everyone off balance. Disgruntled murmuring spread through his crew and all eyes turned to the helm, which would have been the source of the sudden shift. Sparrow was leaning obnoxiously against the wheel and surveying everyone with an indiscernible expression. As he trailed down the stairs, dismissing the unconscious sailor at the bottom, whispers circulated both his crew and what remained of the pirate crew.

“Spanish,” he declared, addressing Armando, “I would like to bargain.”

The Spaniard turned his weapon on the arrogant pirate. “You are in no place to bargain,” he spat.

“Au contraire, Captain Salazar.” A click redirected his glower from Sparrow’s face to the gun which had appeared in the pirate’s hand. “I think it is you who needs to watch your words.” Armando was greeted with a cold, calculating glare that made him freeze. “The compass, if you would?”

“If you kill me, then my crew will finish you off in seconds.” he sneered.

“Ah but you have just come back to life! It would be a shame to have to go back to being dead so soon, don’t you think?” Armando remained silent and Jack nodded stiffly. “The compass,” he repeated.

Armando pulled it from his pocket and tossed it to the pirate reluctantly. Jack flipped it open and stared at it for a moment before closing it and pocketing it; it was only then that he started to relax and met Armando’s burning gaze with a smug smirk.

“Now, a bargain—”

“Blimey, it’s Captain Jack Sparrow.”

“We’re saved!”

“Sparrow?”

“From the legend!”

Shouts from the restrained pirates interrupted Jack, but they were swiftly silenced by Armando’s crew, who raised their weapons threateningly. All it took was a brief slip up, a worried glance in the pirate crew’s direction, and the tables had turned. The little bird noticed Armando’s terrible grin, and realised that he should have flown away while he had the chance.

“Sparrow,” Salazar crooned, taking a predatory step forward, “your attachments will always be your weakness.”

Jack refused to take a step back and raised the gun up threateningly, but faltered at the sight of a young boy, a terrified child huddled amongst the remaining pirates. Lowering the weapon, he looked wearily into those possessive eyes, and made his decision.

“If you release these men, guarantee their safety an’ give them a boat an’ some rum to row to the closest island, then I won’t attempt to escape this hellish ship again,” he proposed.

Armando pondered the offer. It was obvious the little bird could not be contained in a locked cage for long, but what if he stayed there willingly?

“And how will you guarantee your promise?” he demanded.

Jack thought for a moment. “Well you sank me Pearl, so the only thing I ‘ave for insurance is me compass.” He looked down at the object sullenly, unwilling to give it up right after getting it back.

“Deal.”

Jack measured his stare carefully. “Release ‘em, and then I’ll give you the compass.”

Salazar hesitated, but eventually complied, ordering his men to do what Sparrow had asked. As the pirates were filed onto the boat, they kept their eyes on Jack for as long as they could. Looks of awe and concern were sent to him, but all he could do was grin reassuringly; it seemed to placate their worries and paint their faces in ignorant gratitude. When their boat was sent off, hysterical cheers of relief following them, a tense silence remained aboard the Silent Mary.

Jack was the first one to break it, clearing his throat and avoiding the heavy gazes set on him. “Well then I best be off to the brig. I think that we all got some thinking to do.”

“The compass, Sparrow.” Salazar reminded, and the pirate froze, rubbing his neck nervously. A harsh look from the Spaniard made him shiver, and he promptly scampered over to drop the item into his waiting hand, careful to keep as much distance between them as possible. The open caution his pirate displayed around him moved something inside of Salazar’s chest. He wasn’t sure if the feeling was sadness, or shame or anger, but he settled on the latter.

“Lock him in the brig.”

“Sir should we keep a guard on duty?” His lieutenant asked timidly.

“There is no need. I’m sure our guest will adhere to his word.” He cast a threatening look in Sparrow’s direction and the man nodded quietly, eyes fixed on the delicate compass in his hand. Jack was led below deck, and Armando surveyed the blood mattered deck and the few bodies laying around.

“Throw the bodies overboard, and clean up this mess.” With that he stalked into his cabin and locked the door behind him. *Sparrow was right, they did have a lot to think about.*

That night while he laid in his bed, able to enjoy the luxurious mattress and feel the soft glow of candles, he dreamt restlessly. Sparrow haunted him with dark, fearful eyes that flittered to bold insolence and defiance as he led him to his defeat, and seared himself into Armando’s mind.

He saw his pirate’s admission as he sacrificed his Pearl, his life and his freedom for his people. Armando saw the burning agony in his eyes as he witnessed his boat alight with destruction. *He had brought him pain.* He remembered the fledgling Sparrow had taken under his wing, and risked his life to rescue. *He had brought him suffering.* The crew of miscreants Sparrow had sheltered with his colourful song and distractions, just so they could escape and live to see another sunrise; they stared at Sparrow with reverence, and they looked at him with intoxicating dread. He was a nightmare and Sparrow was an angel to chase away their worries and protect them with his fragile wings that were too small to save everyone, but he tried anyway. *He had brought his pirate grief, and had become worse than the monsters he sought to destroy.*

Breaking out of his toutine in cold sweat, he sat up quickly and climbed out of bed. He barely remembered to grab his coat as he left his cabin to take a deep breath of the cool night air.

“Spanish? I didn’t think that you’d be up now.”

There was only one person who called him that. Armando growled and turned to face the pirate, who was leaning against the railing of the ship and staring up at the glittering stars. He completely relaxed, and made no motion to turn around.

“Why are you not in the brig?”

“I agreed not to leave this ship,” the pirate contradicted, “not to be confined to the brig.”

Armando released a heavy sigh, his abrupt anger draining in the calmness of the night. He took a step closer to Sparrow, but didn’t dare get any closer as the pirate tensed. Another moment of silence and the Spaniard observed the man, his dreadlocks swaying gently in the breeze and the thin linen of his clothes ruffling slightly. His breath condensed in the air but the cold didn’t seem to bother him, in fact he seemed very much at home with the gentle rocking of a ship and the rippling water below him.

“Why did you become a pirate?” he asked.

Sharp eyes snapped to him and Salazar was captivated by how his little bird looked under the moonlight, with the stars reflecting in those dark irises making it seem that they were the night sky.

“Why do you want to know?” the pirate wondered dubiously.

“Because if you love the sea, then why revert to the ways of thievery and murder if you could have sailed as a merchant, or in the navy?”

Sparrow’s bitter laugh startled the Spaniard slightly. “Oh I tried that,” he said, “but it didn’t work out very well for me.” Pulling up his sleeve, he revealed thin white scars that traced the up his arm, as well as a sparrow tattoo, right above the branded ‘P’.

“Who did this to you?” Salazar snarled, unwarranted fury suddenly returning.

Jack looked at him strangely before answering, “Cutler Beckett. But he’s dead now,” he added with an empty smile. “Gave me this because I decided to liberate his cargo. Wasn’t too happy ‘is *slaves* weren’t delivered on time. An’ that was yer second question by the way.”

Salazar was frozen as the new information fled though his mind, completing the intricate puzzle of the man before him. Instinctively, he stepped forward and tried to grab the pirate but Jack’s eyes widened in fear and he slipped away, scurrying to the other side of the deck with darting vision searching for possible escapes – something that stabbed at Salazar’s chest.

“You are no pirate, Sparrow.”

His little bird ruffled his feathers offendedly and narrowed his eyes. “I’m a pirate! I’m Captain Jack Sparrow!” he squawked. Armando chuckled, but his smile faded as he considered his options now. He could not pretend that Sparrow had not captured his interest like no other and it would be a shame to release him now, but a subtle guilt was blooming in his chest. It seemed the madness the Devil’s Triangle had inflicted had been clouding his judgement even after the curse was lifted, and now that the blindfold was being raised he was seeing his justice as the cruelty that it was.

But Armando was a selfish man.

The Spaniard noticed how his pirate shivered as the next gust of ocean breeze swirled past them, and his lips twitched into a grin. The little bird was more affected by the cold than he let on. Taking measured steps towards Sparrow he approached him like he was stalking a skittish animal and hung his coat over the shorter man’s tense shoulders. When his hand brushed against Sparrow’s delicate neck the man stepped back in alarm and nearly tripped on the end of the long coat. They stared at each other silently until Armando nodded in satisfaction and retreated back into his cabin, leaving a thoroughly confused pirate on the deck.

The next morning Armando was greeted by frantic knocking on his door. He got up slowly and opened it to find his lieutenant hopping around anxiously on the other side.

“Sir! The pirate has escaped and no one can catch him. He’s stolen your coat!” he cried, but paused when his Captain’s laugh reverberated through the ship.

“It’s fine, lieutenant. Ignore the pirate and return to your post.” he said, humour still lining his words as he closed his door on the stunned sailor.

=====

When he emerged from his cabin, most things seemed to be back to normal and the jostling on deck had quieted down.

An uproarious cheer made his look over to the group of sailors huddled around someone, he glanced at his lieutenant who was watching the sailors with clear disapproval; when he caught the man's eyes, he shook his head and turned to get back to work. Armando narrowed his eyes as a generous bottle of rum was tipped back, and passed around the circle. The laughter and chatter was instantly silenced as a dramatic voice emanated from the midst of the men, drawing them back into the entrancing, outrageous tale.

““An so I turned to face the roaring beasty, and– Capt’n”!” Jack leapt up, a bottle in his hand, and waved theatrically. The men who were listening intently to his story groaned at the interruption.

“Common pirate, what happened next?” one of them slurred, Spanish accent oozing into his words.

“Why does Sparrow have rum?” Salazar asked coldly. At his captain's voice the sailor startled and tried to stand, but swayed precariously and slumped back onto his barrel.

“Sorry Capt'n, but ‘e asked nicely.”

Salazar scoffed, but berated himself as he realised he should have done more to keep his crew away from Sparrow's siren's song.

“You know Spanish, you look like you could use a drink.” Jack commented with a sly grin. It was then that the Spaniard noticed his coat still hanging off his pirates shoulders, and was coiled in a serpentine possessiveness that constricted his next words and confined them in his throat. The satisfied smile that curled up his *pajarito*'s lips nearly made him snarl.

“Come, Sparrow.” He restrained himself from grabbing the tricky bird, but stormed back towards his cabin while Jack followed at a leisurely pace, promising the disappointed sailors that he would continue his tale later, and trying to keep the caution out of his steps.

Following Salazar into his cabin, Jack observed the room with interest. Flickering candles emmended a soft glow in the darkened corners; the room was littered with a few books but

otherwise it was rather impersonal. A bed draped in velvet sheets lay in the corner and, in the center of the room, a luxurious oak desk was scattered with maps that flaunted gauged holes and violent tares in some places. Sitting heavily in the chair behind the desk, Armando watched his pirate's eyes sift through his belongings. After realising he was being scrutinised, Sparrow flitted forwards and perched himself on the edge of his desk, pulling a bottle of rum out of his coat.

"So you got any glasses?" the pirate asked casually.

"I'm not drinking." he asserted, but his mind was distracted.

Kohl accentuated the mischievous fire that contrasted the Spaniard's shark-like eyes, life and adventures decorating his face; interesting trinkets woven into the dreadlocks swayed with Sparrow's erratic yet graceful movements. Armando found himself bewitched by his strange beauty. So ensnared that he did not notice Jack gathering two glasses and filling them till they were brimming with drink until he took a mindless sip. Enjoying the numbing burn in his throat, he fought the caressing fog that threatened to envelop his mind as more alcohol settled in his stomach.

Sparrow raised his expensive wine glass in salute before downing the rum easily, his little bird's audacity making Armando want to laugh and snarl at the same time. Little fidgets and his tense position on the very edge of the table gave away the bird's unease. But now Armando didn't want his *pajarito* to fear him. He wanted to hold him, and protect him from the pirates who had left him and abandoned him to fate's whims.

When a heavy hand pulled Jack towards the Spaniard, Jack tried to struggle out of the grip. Arms encircled and caged him to Salazar's chest so he couldn't move away from the warm breath against his neck.

"Ah, Spanish?" he asked tightly.

The chest behind him rumbled, sending vibrations through his body. Tension and fear held his pirate rigid in his arms, and Armando sighed in displeasure. A few quiet seconds passed, and Sparrow seemed to relax against him. When he shifted, the pirate would try and flutter out of his hold, but would always be drawn back in by strong arms, shivering slightly as Salazar's breath tickled his ear. Feeling a new fire flickering in his chest, Salazar lent down to capture his pirate's lips, but instead he grazed the man's cheek.

"I don't think you want to do that Spanish," the pirate cautioned.

“Why?”

Jack was surprised by the unbidden question. Not the question itself, but the tone; it was desperate and sad, and hopeful – no sign of the feared *El Matador Del Mar* in his eyes. He was more like an optimistic puppy.

His little bird’s eyes had widened at the question and this time, when he attempted to fly from his hold, Armando loosened his grip and let him dance away.

“I’m sorry *pajarito* , I didn’t mean to scare you.”

But it was too late and Sparrow’s wings were fluttering anxiously.

“Sorry mate, I think I got to go,” he said earnestly, and Armando could only watch as his pirate left in a haste, forgetting his typical eccentric walk as the door clicked shut behind him. The intoxicated Spaniard was left in the dim, flickering light of candles, a half empty bottle of rum and a gaping, gnawing feeling in his chest that only seemed satisfied when he was around the pirate.

As Jack stumbled back onto the deck, the sea breeze and the sway of the waves managed to subdue the panic that had seized his chest. Sighing thankfully, his eyes wandered over to the horizon as his mind set to understand this turn of events.

=====

For three days Sparrow avoided the Spaniard like the plague. Armando barely caught sight of him before he had darted away in the opposite direction. Even the crew was becoming *fond* of the evasive man; he seemed happy enough to provide them with entertainment but always vanished at the sight of their captain. When he wasn’t bellowing orders or pouring over maps then Armando was keeping an eye out for his pirate, but with each day he became more frustrated at his continued absence.

Catching him snooping around the hull after three days made Armando’s gut churn with built up irritation.

“Sparrow!” he snapped.

Spinning around to watch him carefully, his pirate couldn't hide his agitation; the look that once gave Armando a rush of satisfaction was like a knife in his chest and the feeling left him immobile. Sparrow took the opportunity to discreetly shuffle towards the exit while Armando grasped at a conflicting void of emotions.

A humiliating wave of desperation submerged him for a moment, and he felt himself pulling the compass from his pocket. He stared hard at the key to his Sparrow's cage and ground out an order for the man to stop.

Jack was glued to the floor when the Spaniard advanced on him and tried not to flinch as his hand brushed his side. Something clinked as it was dropped into his hand and when he felt the familiar edges of his compass he couldn't hold back a grin. Something urged him to check it, to make sure it was still working and hold the only remnant of the Pear close to his chest but the Spaniard in front of him made him pause.

"Why?" he asked.

Salazar just smiled softly and shook his head sadly, "You don't trust me *mi pajarito*."

The planks groaned under his heavy steps as he left the pirate to slip his compass into his pocket and stare after him.

That night, when the stars hung from the sky like diamonds and the moon cast her gentle glow upon the ship, Jack blamed his curiosity when he decided not to run as the Spaniard approached him. Instead the side of his lip lifted in a half smile and he invited the proximity.

"Spanish," he greeted.

Armando noticed that there was something new in his pirate's eyes that had replaced the grim pain and fear.

"Sparrow."

He drew closer and an inexplicable desire overcame him. He reached out and enveloped the pirate

in a gentle hold; when he relaxed into his arms a warm feeling flooded Armando's chest and the smile grew on his face. The silence was still and comforting, and Armando relished in the trust he had been gifted.

“Why do you hate pirates?”

Salazar's grip on Jack's shoulder's tightened. “Not all pirates.”

Ignoring the implications, Jack repeated his question lightly, very much aware of the strong arms encircling him.

“They killed my family.”

A soft ‘oh’ was the only way he could think to respond. “I’m sorry,” he whispered, despite knowing it was pointless.

“It was not you, *mi pajarito*. I can see that now.”

As the lulling tranquility returned Jack found himself not minding the secure hold, and instead leaned into the solid chest behind him. His eyes fluttered shut as he listened intently to the quiet thump of a heart beneath the rich fabric. When a tender hand ran though his dreadlocks he was yanked back into reality. He pulled away in a flurry, stumbling backwards when there was no resistance to his escape.

“Sorry— I must go.”

And Jack ran, *he always ran*, skittering off to a secluded area of the ship where he groaned into his trembling hands. Jerkily checking his compass again, he straightened his back and frowned at the small item in offense while mumbling something under his breath.

Meanwhile Salazar was left alone in the cold night air, but his spirits were not deterred and instead he felt something align inside of him. In wanting to capture a pirate, he had allowed a thief to steal his heart – and he found he didn’t mind.

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“Captain! Sir, a pirate ship is approaching!”

Salazar spun around, gripping his sword instinctively. Shouts rang through the ship, rousing the rest of the crew and gathering them up on deck. The Spaniard caught sight of Sparrow wading through the growing crowd, but he quickly disappeared inside the mass.

“Ready the cannons and prepare to board.”

Jack skirted through the bustling sailors unnoticed and made his way to the stern.

A resounding cry halted him, “Captain, it’s those pirates from before. It’s Sparrow’s crew!”

And a sly smile crept up Jack’s face.

Salazar had immersed himself in relaying orders, but something was bothering him about the ship. It had approached the Silent Mary with obvious intent, yet was keeping a safe distance between them. His thoughts kept traveling back to Sparrow, and with a hint of hesitation, he commanded his men to prepare their weapons. As the ship came close enough to recognise the crew, Salazar was stricken with a cold sense of foreboding. He recognised Barbossa at the helm, saw the young boy Jack had saved from him and the girl on deck as well, and realised that he hadn’t seen his pirate for a while.

Sparrow. His pirate was standing precariously on the railing and grinning wildly as he attached a rope to a cannon and tossed it over the rigging. Seeing the madness that Jack was planning, he couldn’t help the concern that rose up in his chest.

“Sparrow!”

Jack looked up and something flashed in his eyes; he gave the Spaniard a quirky smile but there was something akin to disappointment written on his face.

“Don’t worry mate, I’ve done this before and it’s perfectly safe,” he assured.

Lighting the cannon, the explosion echoed in Armando's ears and he watched Jack soar away from him. When the pirate crew surrounded him joyous exclamations were heard, and Salazar felt... cold. When he caught his pirate's eyes for a moment, and the man looked away, something in him ached. A cannon fired, a warning shot created a splash near where the Silent Mary floated, and all Salazar could do was stare.

“Sir, should we return enemy fire?”

“No. Leave the cannons.” He paused, “We will let them go.”

The crew obeyed slowly. They gathered at the railing to watch the pirate ship fill its sails and disappear into the horizon. There was an eerie silence, and the absence of the pirate resounded hollowly through the ship; Salazar knew that now he had released Sparrow from his cage, he would not be coming back.

=====

“How ye still alive Jack?”

“Jack we were worried about you!”

“We thought you were dead, but then we heard in a tavern that you'd bargained yer escape fer some pirates lives, and word had spread and—”

People were clamouring around him and patting his back, and Jack soaked up the attention like a sponge. “Didn't think you'd come back fer me,” he joked.

“Of course we would. You saved us Jack,” it was Henry who spoke, and he was grinning from ear to ear.

“Jack, what happened? We saw the Pearl burning—” Carina started, but stopped when she saw Jack's face fall.

“The Pearl couldn’t be saved,” Barbossa muttered, nodding in resignation. “We, uh, *found* this ship when we heard you were still alive.”

Jack nodded quietly, but a smile lit up his face again after a second, “I still got me compass though,” he said, patting his pocket.

“Stole it back from the Spaniard I’d say,” someone praised.

Pausing for a second, Jack nodded slowly in affirmation but a frown had appeared on his face. “Excuse me lads, and lady,” he added, “but I think the weather is changing.”

Wandering off and leaving a baffled crew squinting at the sunny sky, Jack snapped his compass open and grinned at it as he took the wheel. It seemed rum was not the only thing he desired at the moment, after all, he was an honest pirate who had made a bargain; and he would always keep his word (mostly).

=====

Armando glared at the glittering waves while the stars twinkled conspiringly above him. Soft tapping against wood prompted him to glance down at the shadows cast by the figure head. Seeing a person crouched against the hull he tensed, but catching dark, familiar eyes he paused in shock. Shining teeth and a cheshire grin cut off any questions but he narrowed his eyes as Sparrow climbed onto the deck and stalked up to him.

“Sparro—”

Chapped, salty lips connected lightly with his. Control and common sense fled him and all he could think about was how it felt to have Sparrow there. He pulled him closer and delicate hands climbed up his chest to hang around his neck; a cheeky bite made him growl, and he deepened the kiss fervently. There was so much to explore and taste, but all Armando could do was hold his pirate near and enjoy the moment.

When they pulled away, Armando spoke first. “*Mi pajarito* , you came back,” he whispered.

Jack grinned and pressed their foreheads together, “I made a bargain,” he said, “an’ the compass never lies.”

He pulled the little item out and opened it steadily, the needle didn't waver away from the Spaniard. Armando smiled and cupped the pirate's face.

"Will you stay with me forever?"

Jack's eyes flickered away, "I can't, not forever, but I can stay tonight."

"As long as you return *pajarito* , " he reassured, and Jack responded with a heartfelt kiss.

"Now, *Captain* , will you take me to your cabin?"

Salazar smiled wickedly, "I would take you anywhere you wanted."

Eyes dancing with mischief, Jack spoke, "Well you'll have to catch me first."

End Notes

If you got this far I hope that you enjoyed this fic.

I only watched the movie once, and absolutely ages ago too – never gonna rewatch it either, so sorry for any major inaccuracies. I also apologise to any Spanish speakers if google translate butchered that too.

I really appreciate any comments and criticism; this took me ages to write and I've read it over so many times the whole thing seems dry to me lol. (hopefully not for you too)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!